

Officership in the Iraqi Armed Forces



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The following article is an English translation of a proposed statement of the Iraqi Professional Military Ethic as it applies to service as an officer in the Iraqi Joint Forces. It outlines the standards of military professionalism envisioned by the Iraqi senior leadership for Iraqi officers and, as such, will serve as a foundation document for the teaching and integration of professional ethics training into education from the Iraqi Military Academy through the senior defense college.

This statement is an adapted version of a 2004 U.S. Officership Concept Paper written by members of the staff and faculty at the U.S. Military Academy (USMA). It was intended for integration into U.S. Army leadership doctrine.

In an effort to implement measures to instill into the Iraqi military a sense of professionalism and mission, MG Nqshbande selected the USMA concept paper as the basis for an Iraqi statement of ethics, primarily because of its well-articulated focus on the universal professional military ethical standards and roles that the Iraqi leadership wants to instill in the new Iraqi Officer Corps. These include a sense of obligation to become a highly competent and skilled warrior; recognition that a soldier's highest obligation is to be a servant of the nation and people as a whole; a sense of self-identity and shared pride as members of an honorable profession and national institution; and a sense of obligation to serve the nation with integrity, honesty, and courage as leaders of character. Subsequently, MG Nqshbande adapted, modified, and retranslated portions of the paper to ensure the concepts were properly conveyed in Arabic military terminology and were appropriately compatible with the conventions, traditions, and expressions of Arabic military culture.

Writers of the basic concept paper upon which the above statement of ethics is based were Colonel Michael Haith, U.S. Army, Retired, then director of the William E. Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic; Colonel Tom Kolditz, Head of the Department of Behavioral Science and Leadership; Colonel Joe LeBoeuf, U.S. Army, Retired, then Academy Professor of Behavioral Sciences; Colonel Don Snider, U.S. Army, Retired, Ph.D., Professor of Social Sciences; Colonel Tom Weaver, former director of the Office of Programs and Analysis, USMA; Colonel Michael Meese, Head of the Department of Social Sciences; and Lieutenant Colonel Jim McDonough, U.S. Army, Retired, former Professor of Outreach, Simon Center. Rick Swain, Ph.D., Olin Professor of Officership, Simon Center, acted as committee secretary.

OFFICERSHIP is the practice of being a commissioned leader, accountable to the Prime Minister of Iraq for the Army and its mission. Officers swear an oath of loyalty and service to the Constitution. Officers apply discretionary judgment and bear ultimate moral responsibility for their decisions. Their commission imposes total accountability and unlimited liability. Essential to officership is a unique, shared self-concept that is shaped by what officers KNOW and DO, but most important, by a deeply

PHOTO: An Iraqi army officer explains to his troops how he wants to execute a building-clearing exercise in Hateen, Iraq, 29 April 2006. (DOD)

held personal understanding and acceptance of what a commissioned officer must be. This shared self-concept consists of four interrelated identities: warrior, servant of the Nation, member of an honorable profession, and leader of character. Grounded in values, this shared self-concept inspires and shapes the Iraqi officer and the Iraqi Officer Corps.

The basic notions about the nature and obligations of being a commissioned officer arise from the Constitution, the commissioning act, and the nature of the profession. Officership is reflected in the unique set of beliefs, skills, competencies, and practices that distinguish and link officers as the ultimately accountable leaders of units, Soldiers, and the Army profession.

Officership is the inspirational basis of authority, empowered and driven by deeply held convictions and a commitment to be the standard bearer for individual and unit performance and conduct. Officership is a compelling ideal that all officers aspire to and one that propels officers' passion for continuous growth, the accomplishment of all assigned missions, Soldiers' well-being, and the security of the Nation. Officership creates a bond between leader and led. It produces teamwork and efficacy to anticipate and overmatch all circumstances and adversity. Officership establishes and maintains the bond of trust between the Iraqi Military Profession and the Iraqi people. By their commission, officers are the moral agents of the Nation. This document seeks to stimulate and guide continuing discussion about officership.

Warrior

The Officer is a Soldier first. The Iraqi Army exists to fight battles, to win the Nation's wars, and to secure the peace as part of the Nation's joint warfighting team. To serve those purposes, commissioned officers assume unique responsibilities and duties. Officers lead the military profession in service to the Iraqi people. Commissioned officership is a professional practice that realizes the special trust and confidence the Nation places in the officer's patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities—qualities highlighted in the officer's commission.

Trust. Leadership is at the core of the military profession. Officership entails leadership because our military is its people. Soldiers are the centerpiece of our formations. Officership must be

grounded in a solid understanding of human nature and development. Officers are entrusted not simply with the daily welfare but with the very lives of Iraqi youth. They must be compassionate leaders living balanced lives. Every day officers influence, shape, and improve the profession to which they belong by caring for the people under their command, by creating a positive climate, and by inspiring subordinates to excel. An officer's responsibility to do the best he can for his subordinates in the most trying of circumstances is the foundation of the bond of trust that is required for units to endure the rigors of combat.

Responsibility. Commissioned officership, practiced by commissioned leaders from second lieutenant to general, involves a particular kind of leadership. Commissioned officership is fundamentally concerned with responsibility—"exceptional and unrelenting responsibility."¹ Commissioned officership differs from other forms of leadership in the quality and kind of expert knowledge required, in

The Soldier's Creed

I am an Iraqi Soldier

**I am a Warrior and a member of a unit and the Army.
I serve the people of the Iraq and live the Army Values.**

I am committed to place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never retreat.

I will never leave an injured or fallen brother.

I am disciplined, I obey and execute the orders of my superiors. I am mentally and physically strong. I am proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I am truthful to my people, my brothers in arms and my leaders. I am transparent, I will never accept bribes and I will never cheat my people, my brothers in arms and my leaders. I am committed to maintaining my arms and the Army property, and my life (myself).

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy anywhere, to fight and destroy the enemies of the Iraqi people.

I am loyal to my country, to the people, and to the Army. I am the guardian of the freedom and the way of life of the Iraqi people.

I am an Iraqi Soldier.

the breadth of responsibility, and in the magnitude of the consequences of inaction or ineffectiveness. Both the noncommissioned officer (NCO) and officer swear an oath to obey lawful orders, to protect the land of Iraq and its people from all aggression, and to be loyal to the principles of the Constitution. There is a distinction between the officer and the NCO, however, that establishes a different expectation for initiative. Officers depend on the counsel, technical skill, maturity, and experience of NCOs to take the officers' instructions and intent and execute (or implement) purposeful action. Officers depend on the same counsel, technical skill, maturity, and experience for assistance in reaching a decision.

Only commissioned officers are entrusted with command. The life and death decisions conveyed by NCOs and executed by Iraqi Soldiers *begin* with officers. Thus there are legal distinctions between offenses against the authority of commissioned and noncommissioned officers and specific offenses that only an officer can commit. Officers are strictly accountable for their actions.

Senior officers bear a particular responsibility for the consequences of their decisions and for the quality of advice given, or not given, to their civilian superiors. Each officer's development of a powerful self-concept guiding individual behavior in all aspects of life depends on an understanding of the unique requirements of being a commissioned leader. A strong component of humility in the face of the moral weight of responsibility is an essential component of the Iraqi officer's character.

Commissioned officers should see themselves in terms of the four distinct identities mentioned, and they should see officership as a moral activity governed by both the emotional and rational faculties. Commissioned service is a matter of the heart as well as of the head. Mastery requires a commitment to lifelong learning and dedicated practice throughout one's professional life.

The Iraqi Military Officer

The officer is a *warrior*. A warrior is not just a warfighter. History is replete with warfighters who fought with great skill and achieved success without

restraint. The oath of office commits the officer to safeguard the unity of Iraq and the dignity of its citizens and their personal freedoms. This promise is the defining characteristic of the Iraqi officer, indeed of any Iraqi Soldier. It demands the full measure of the warrior's commitment to victory and full adherence to standards of law and morality. The Iraqi officer is a warfighter whose specialty is the *disciplined application of force* or the untiring support of those who apply force in accordance with the law and custom of war. The warrior has an ethos that refuses to accept defeat, but discipline informs him that some roads to victory can be as destructive to the Iraqi Armed Forces and the national soul as an operational defeat.

Because the consequences of failure are so severe, officers are expected, when necessary, to be ready to sacrifice their Soldiers' lives and

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their own to accomplish assigned missions. This relationship of unlimited liability must characterize every officer's service to the Iraqi people. Whether officers serve a full career or only a

few years, it is their duty to give their full personal commitment to accomplish the mission, even at the sacrifice of their lives. In times of crisis, on the battlefield or during the performance of peacetime duties, an officer understands that there are times when his life is not important if it is preserved at the cost of the mission or to the detriment of the Nation's safety. This obligation is true for support and combat arms officers equally.

So, the warrior must have the determination, desire, and competence to win, as well as the discipline to do so within the laws of war and the moral constraints of honor. Iraq expects its armed forces to win once they are committed to battle and, as a nation governed by the rule of law, to win honorably. The warrior has a vital role in lesser conflicts too. In stability and support operations, as in war, it is most often the demonstrated will to act, as well as the recognized ability to finish the issue, that makes actual fighting unnecessary.

The officer as warrior must possess a warrior ethos; tactical and technical proficiency in the threat or application of violent force; and mental,

physical, and emotional stamina and toughness. The Warrior Ethos forms the foundation for the Iraqi Soldiers' spirit and total commitment to victory, in peace and war, always exemplifying ethical behavior and ethical values. Soldiers put the mission first, refuse to accept defeat, never quit, and never leave behind a fellow Soldier. Their absolute faith in themselves and their comrades makes the Iraqi Armed Forces invariably persuasive in peace and invincible in war.

Warriors must possess the ability and will to destroy the enemy. The same unyielding commitment to mission accomplishment must reside within the heart of all officers, combat arms and support. Officers employ their weapons, move their units tactically, and secure themselves and their Soldiers. Lower ranking officers are often called on to lead subordinates by direct example. Senior officers direct and sustain ground combat but must never avoid the risk of death because they think themselves too important to be sacrificed.

Iraqi leaders leverage teamwork as a force multiplier. Soldiers act as members of larger fighting units. They display loyalty to their peers and unit. They are well disciplined, coordinated, and accountable for their actions under legal and lawful command. To retain Soldiers' confidence, officers require the adaptability, mental and physical agility, moral courage, and mental toughness to make necessary and right decisions in situations of uncertainty, even when their own lives and those of their Soldiers are in the balance. A key responsibility for the warrior officer is to provide for command succession in the event of his loss and to develop his subordinate leaders so the unit can go on to accomplish the mission in his absence.

Warriors must have technical and tactical proficiency, or competence, in the threat or application of violent force to ensure victory or success. Warriors are self-aware: They are able to assess their abilities, identify strengths, recognize opportunities, and correct weaknesses in an operational setting. The specific requirements for individual competence change throughout a career as an officer's responsibilities and scope of action change. At the lower levels,

technical proficiency means expertise in direct leadership and in the employment of various weapons or systems, the tools for ensuring success in combat. Increased responsibility requires greater vision.

In addition to the knowledge of direct leadership, the officer must gain a thorough understanding of the capabilities of different types of units and systems as well as an ability to employ them creatively to achieve purposes that transcend the immediate outcome of a given fight. At higher levels of responsibility, competence signifies the mental ability to translate abstract political objectives into a desired outcome, to formulate and direct a series of discrete actions to achieve that outcome, and to explain with clarity and precision what is required and possible to civilian officials who possess little or no military experience.

Much of the officer's authority derives from superior professional knowledge and understanding of the situation—from the ability to formulate solutions and command resources not immediately available to subordinates. Because of the consequences of failure, competence is an ethical imperative for the warrior-

officer. Because the requirements of competence change over an officer's career, the officer must be uniquely committed to a lifetime of periodic self-assessment and the pursuit of relevant continuing education in institutional settings, in units, and through an active program of self-education. Officers also have the duty to ensure that the next generation of officers is mentored in ways that allow them to grow rapidly in the profession.

The warrior also must be mentally, physically, and emotionally resilient. The development and execution of often-prolonged military operations in the face of a determined and resourceful adversary is mentally, physically, and emotionally challenging. The presence of an independent and active opponent is the defining characteristic of the environment of officership. "I know of no branch of art or science," British General Sir Archibald Wavell wrote, "in which rivals are at liberty to throw stones at the artist or scientist, to steal his tools and to destroy his materials, while he is working, always against time, on his picture or statue or experiment."²

Iraqi leaders leverage teamwork as a force multiplier.



DOD

An Iraqi battalion commander hands out school supplies to Iraqi children during a joint patrol in Baghdad, Iraq, 6 May 2006.

Chaos, fear, fatigue, friction, personal danger, and uncertainty—the fog of war—are intrinsic attributes of combat. The warrior-officer must possess extraordinary mental, emotional, and physical fitness to maintain clear thinking under extraordinary stress. The officer must be self-aware and adaptable, recognizing and responding rapidly to changing circumstances and requirements. The officer must possess the moral force to persevere when the courage of subordinates begins to falter.

Servant of the Nation

The officer is a servant of the Nation. The officer's oath is to be loyal to the principles of the Constitution. Military officers in a democracy bear a particular responsibility to live a life of duty, service to the Nation, loyalty to the Constitution, and subordination to civilian superiors. Officers abstain from forms of political expression and action open to their fellow citizens. They serve whenever and wherever the Nation and its leaders send them. The notion of dependable service to country creates the moral foundation for the officer's individual duty, a duty tied neither to economic gain nor to the limitations of the clock. The officer must internalize a moral obligation to act effectively and a sense of duty and commitment to serve with unlimited liability. Living a life of service to the Nation means accepting the contract of unlimited

liability even when the Nation calls for sacrifice and devotion to duty at a personally inconvenient time. It means good stewardship over the Nation's goods and care for the needs and welfare of the Soldiers assigned. Officers serve for two principal reasons: personal and professional satisfaction. The professional is finished only when the task is done or the mission accomplished—when the Iraqi people and their way of life are secure. Success in war demands the subordination of the individual will to the responsibilities of the group; democracy likewise requires the subordination of the profession to the control of civilian leaders.

Member of an Honorable Profession

The officer is a member of an honorable profession. Professions are highly specialized functional groups organized around a core body of expert knowledge to do work society is unable to do for itself. As professionals, Iraqi officers maintain their focus on the essential requirements of their calling, namely, to acquire and maintain expert knowledge of warfare and to develop other officers, Soldiers, and units able to apply their expertise to new missions assigned by the democratically elected or appointed representatives of the Iraqi people. Although Iraqi Armed Forces perform many functions, the Constitution directs that they shall be organized, trained, and equipped for prompt and sustained combat operations on land, sea, and air in the defense of Iraq, its people, and its way of life.

The Iraqi Armed Forces provide the capability to fight as a joint team. They train and equip Soldiers, Airmen, and Sailors and develop leaders. Even when an officer is assigned unfamiliar duties, maintaining focus and personal proficiency in the conduct of air-sea-ground warfare at the tactical and operational levels is a fundamental requirement of Iraqi officership. Failure to maintain focus on the requirements of the core functions leads to failure in battle and loss of the public's confidence. Equally

dangerous is a tendency to resist changes in the Nation's expectations when called to take on new responsibilities and master new roles.

Because of their knowledge and abilities, officers are granted authority to act and to direct others to act. Officers are commissioned agents of the Nation, serving within their government with authority to direct others in mortal combat and to be obeyed under the legal and moral authority of the Constitution and other implementing law. To be a professional, the officer must possess the necessary expert knowledge of the profession of arms, the ability to develop that expertise in others, and the talent to employ that expertise creatively, often in unexpected or unfamiliar circumstances. Having sworn to obey orders with alacrity and courage, the officer is expected to display discretionary judgment in conditions of ambiguity. Since war can seldom be predicted, necessary adaptability requires a lifetime of learning and practice.

Professional organizations are granted a degree of autonomy. As long as their behavior does not conflict with basic legal and societal values, they possess the freedom to practice as well as to police the behavior of their members. For example, the lethal and chaotic nature of warfare requires a higher standard of good order and discipline than is normal in a democratic society. The military profession maintains a strong, independent code of ethics, a unique body of military law, and a set of cherished and closely guarded customs and courtesies. These essential components of the profession help Soldiers make sense of the violence and chaos of war.

Leaders of Character

Officers are leaders of character. Officers are commissioned by the Nation on the basis of special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities of the candidate to whom the commission is presented. To be successful, the officer must possess the moral presence to command obedience when legal authority alone is inadequate. Supported by other professionals, particularly NCOs, commissioned officers direct and influence Soldiers and units to accomplish assigned missions. They set the organizational climate and standards each day for Soldiers and units throughout Iraq. Officers develop and approve plans and doctrine and write all military regulations.

Commissioned officers do not just lead the Iraqi military profession; they also live in a principled manner. They personally embody and police the professional ethos. They set, adapt, and enforce the profession's standards. Senior leaders must create an environment in which honest dealing can flourish. When the standards of integrity and behavior are not met, leaders must be prepared to identify and remove those who betray the people's trust. Should the profession fail to fulfill the people's trust, officers must be held personally, and in some cases corporately, accountable for everything the profession does or fails to do.

The professional military ethic is a shared understanding of the standards of personal and professional practice that officers demonstrate every day, in every duty, in peace and in war. More than a body of rules for individual behavior, the professional military ethic is an ethos that encompasses the character of, and values peculiar to, the profession of arms. The functional requirements of warfighting, democratic traditions of military service, laws and customs of land warfare, and Iraq's own national values influence the professional military ethic. The ethic is found in military values, Constitutional and military law, accepted principles of the Law of War, and the time-honored traditions of historic units. Understanding that a military force can claim the status of a profession only to the extent that all officers adhere to and enforce a shared ethic, Army officers do not tolerate within their ranks those who flout that ethic.

Officers are more than servants, commanders, trainers, strategists, warriors, and tacticians; ultimately, they are accountable leaders. An officer's honor is not negotiable. Officers do not lie, cheat, steal or engage in any conduct intended for personal gain or to avoid accountability for wrongful action. The foundation for all an officer does is an impeccable character in both his personal and professional life. If the officer is unfaithful at home, fellow officers and Soldiers are justified in doubting his

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fidelity to his official duties and responsibilities. The officer's word must be a bond of trust with senior and subordinate alike that will not compromise truth and honesty. In other words, in all actions, Iraqi officers seek to discover the truth, decide what is right, and demonstrate the moral courage to act accordingly.

Officers exist to provide responsible and accountable leadership for the profession. The officer's commission is the credential to direct others. Such authority imposes unique responsibility: Iraqi officers must lead by example and inspire others to do the same always. They must achieve a balance in their lives between the inherent roles of officership and the diverse obligations of an exemplary human existence. They must maintain high standards of moral, physical, and mental fitness to fulfill their professional responsibilities. As the guardians of the profession, officers must confront forthrightly their own mistakes and those of their superiors, contemporaries, and subordinates, and take the necessary measure to correct those mistakes in accordance with the rightful expectations of the Iraqi people. To maintain the trust of Iraqi society, the profession must elicit the best efforts of all of its members, and it must sustain an honest dialog with civilian leaders and the people.

Living the Life of an Officer

Officership inspires and shapes the officer's behavior at all times. Often filled with conflicting priorities, loyalties, and perspectives, the life of an Iraqi officer can be exceptionally difficult. Officers are guided in their daily actions by their unrelenting selfless duty to Iraq and their Soldiers. When internalized, these values manifest themselves as principles of action, touchstones to which commissioned officers automatically and repeatedly return.

An officer's decisions and actions spring from a deeply held sense of responsibility and from identifying oneself as a warrior, member of a profession, servant of the Nation, and leader of character.

Each of these identities carries with it inspiration, passion, and obligation. Professionals must always behave knowing that the trust and the relative autonomy society accords them are contingent on continued excellence in practice of war and ethical conduct. Officers nurture technical expertise early in their careers and continue to develop its breadth and depth even when assignments take them away from daily contact with tactical units. Officers must be as competent in counterinsurgency operations as in warfighting, but they must never sacrifice their core expertise.

Soldiers are not managed into harm's way, they are led, and leadership depends to a great degree on trust. Built on mutual loyalty, the bond of trust between leader and led is both emotional and rational. It is the Soldier's confidence in the officer's character and military proficiency that forges trust, which itself becomes the foundation of teamwork. Trust depends on presence, demonstrated competence, and a reputation for honest and sympathetic dealing. The Iraqi people entrust Iraqi officers with the lives of their Soldiers. They expect that trust to be secured by the officer's honorable character.

Finally, and fundamentally, officers must be warriors, be they combat arms or support. The underlying imperative of officership is to lead Soldiers in combat; it "is the ultimate to which the whole life's labor of an officer should be directed. He may live to the age of retirement without seeing a battle but he must always be getting ready for it as if he knew the hour of the day it is to break upon him. And then, whether it comes late or early, he must be willing to fight—he must fight."³ **MR**

NOTES

1. S.L.A. Marshall, *The Armed Forces Officer* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 2.

2. GEN Sir Archibald Wavell, *Generals and Generalship: The Lees Knowles Lectures delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1939* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 4-5.

3. Quote from Bruce Catton, *This Hallowed Ground; The Story of the Union Side of the Civil War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1956), 71-72.